INTRODUCTION
Few dramatists have been more articulate on their own behalf than Arthur Miller. His various prefaces, lectures, articles and interviews provide a formidable critical commentary on his nine major plays and on the theory of literature that underlies them. The insight and depth of such critical writings not only show Miller as an important dramatist, but also as an important 'American' dramatist whose work occupies a significant place in the tradition of American literature.

Arthur Miller has till now published nine major plays, film scripts and short stories. Miller was born in NEW YORK city on 17th October, 1915 and has published an interesting account of his early years under the title A BOY GREW UP IN BROOKLYN. Success did not come easily to Miller. He had written eight to nine plays, largely ignored by the theatre world until in 1944 came ALL MY SONS which won the 'Drama Critic' prize for the season's best play of American authorship. Fame and success soon followed with his next play DEATH OF A SALESMAN (1949) for which he was awarded the Pulitzer prize. After this Miller never looked back. With plays like THE CRUCIBLE, A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE, AFTER THE FALL, THE PRICE, he has firmly established himself, along with Eugene O' Neill and Tennessee Williams as the 'Big Three' of American drama.

For the past quarter of a century, a disturbingly large percentage of the plays written for the American theatre have tended to be case histories of all forms of social and psychological aberrations, states Robert W. Corrigan, editor of Critical Essays on Arthur Miller; "for Arthur Miller, who has been a major figure during the whole period, this has not been the case; he has insisted with a continually broadening range that courage, truth, responsibility and faith must be central values of man who would (as they must) live together."
Taken together Miller's works testify in Corrigan's opinion to "Miller's own sense of involvement with modern man's struggle to be himself and have made him one of Modern Theatre's most compelling and important spokesmen". 2

Arthur Miller was granted the status of a major playwright with the professional production of his second full length play. After DEATH OF A SALESMAN was produced in 1949, he was considered by many as one of the world's most important living dramatists and thus acquired an international reputation early in his career. Fortunately Miller knew how to cope with such adulation and was not destroyed by it. But the fame and glamour attached to his name created an atmosphere which made it difficult to consider his artistic achievement with objectivity.

A lot has been written on Arthur Miller and his personal life; his marriage to the famous actress Marilyn Monroe, his disillusionment and breakdown of his relationship with her finds its echo in many of his plays and writings; his leftist ideologies which made him a target of many controversies. Thus, various critical opinions, Miller's own formidable critical writings have tended to confuse one as to the real ideas and attitudes present in his writings.

When recently asked in what way his plays were related to the events of his life, Miller replied "in a sense, all my plays are autobiographical". 3 When John Chapman introduced Arthur Miller to readers of THE BEST PLAYS OF 1948-49, not only as the author of the prize winning DEATH OF A SALESMAN but as "one who has held such tiring jobs as
truck driver, waiter, crew-man on a tanker and even now spends a few weeks each year working in a factory so he will remember what it feels like to stand on one's feet in one place eight hours a day". 4

This image of Miller is not a fictitious one. Not only do the plays suggest an author with an extensive first hand acquaintance with a variety of ordinary employments but they attest to the acquiring of that knowledge the hard way. Miller was growing up during the 'Depression' in America and no other single factor is a more important than this in determining his work.

It was the "Depression' that gave him his compassionate understanding of the insecurity of man in modern industrial civilisation, his deep-rooted belief in social responsibility and the moral earnestness that has occasioned unsympathetic and often unjust criticism". 5

Marriage in 1940 to Mary Slattery whom he had met at college, brought a son and daughter, but it ended in a divorce in June 1956. Miller married Marilyn Monroe on 29th June, 1956 at which time he was very much in the public eye for other reasons, that in the belief that he was supporting the communist movement and controversy regarding his Jewish descent.

However, we are concerned with Miller as a writer and with his place in American literature and more specifically Drama. Miller is more cosmopolitan than American. He has more in common with Ibsen, Shaw and Brecht than with O'Neill, Obet or Wilder. Dennis Welland has called him "the E.M. Forster of the theatre". 6 'Writing only when he has
something to say and refusing to cash in on an easy popularity by repeating himself, Miller is not a prolific writer. According to Welland "it is not poverty of invention or lack of ideas that inhibits him but an excess of self criticism coupled with a restlessness of intellect". For this reason, he has been called "the passionately self-exploring, artist genious type".

It is generally agreed upon by critics that Arthur Miller is a playwright who has placed the idea of commitment and responsibility at the centre of his dramatic theory and practice. It is also commonly held that Miller's intense intellectual and moral development on the great issues of his time has given his theatre its serious and tragic stature. A whole number of labels have been applied to the description of his theatre; some of these labels are totally vague and some are not fully borne out by the close analysis of his drama. Is Miller, for instance, a latter day Ibsen who has made use of the worn out technique of the realistic drama borrowed from his Norwegian master to articulate his obsessive preoccupation with the guilt-laden life of the bourgeois middle class? Or do his plays bear a quasi-marxist stamp as they sometimes tend to be partisan critiques of the American way of life? Could we call him a direct descendent of the playwright of the Depression thirties? Is Miller's vision of life close to Christian existentialism? A critic Dennis Welland believes that "Miller's constant preoccupation is with people who are, in one way or another, denied a sense of community".9 There are others who feel that his plays read like a commentary on the American way of life;
for Miller, just as much as for Hawthorne or Henry James, its a complex fate, being an American and like their novels, all his plays are original and thoughtful enquiries into the nature of that complexity".^^

The purpose of this study is not to resolve the questions centering around Miller's works, but to highlight one of Miller's major concerns; his concern with the individual and his place in society. Thus, this study contains an extensive survey of Miller's intellectual background as well as his function as a serious dramatist. There have also been attempts at using long quotations from Miller's critical writings because they are in my opinion essential for illuminating this study, but here it must be said that Miller is not always his best critic and that some of his comments about his own plays tend to be confusing at times. In the three chapters that follow, I have attempted a close thematic and structural study of the four social plays which belong to the first period of Miller's artistic development which was published in his COLLECTED PLAYS in 1957 - ALL MY SONS (1947), DEATH OF A SALESMAN, THE CRUCIBLE (1953), AND A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1955-1957) with some emphasis on A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS. These plays constitute a cycle. The accent of this study thus falls heavily on the first phase of Miller's artistic development.

Arthur Miller has been the subject of many controversies ever since DEATH OF A SALESMAN. The advocates of private and obscure images of man's disintegration had condemned him for continued adherence to an outworn Ibsen tradition; Eric Bently had seen in the drama "The Little Man as Victim". 10 On the other hand social realists had welcomed Miller too enthusiastically as a writer who avoided violence and sexuality and personal dislocation as a way out of despair.
Thus, Miller in the European tradition had set himself up as "essayist, commentator and moralist".\textsuperscript{11} He repeatedly demanded of the writer "a kind of truthfulness that is larger than the mere invitation of life", and a relentless search for "responsibility and guilt for this world we cannot quite believe we made".\textsuperscript{12} He questioned "what is the most human way to live and where in all the profusion of materiality we have created around us is the cup where the spirit may reside".\textsuperscript{13}

It has rightly been said by one critic that Arthur Miller "discovered himself in the Crucible of the great Depression of the nineteen thirties".\textsuperscript{14} As a young boy used to the security of a middle-class Jewish family in New York city, Miller was personally affected by the economic crash of 1929 and the events which followed it. His father who had been a prosperous business man suffered great losses during the Depression and was forced to move the family to a small town in Brooklyn. The young Miller who had planned on going to Cornell University ended up in a warehouse from which experience he was ultimately to write A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS (1953). Miller has himself acknowledged the importance of the Depression catastrophe in the evolution of his world view; mass unemployment, poverty and the gathering social tensions tended to destroy so much that was human and lovely in his neighbourhood. The Depression thirties unfolded before Miller the facet of capitalism which he later found hard to dismiss from memory. The economic collapse taught Miller "the basic vulnerability of a social system based on greed and sheerly oriented towards profit".\textsuperscript{15} Miller sought to find in the lessons of Depression the coordinates of a high sense of human destiny.
My standard is to be sure derived from my life in the thirties but I believe that it is as old as the drama itself and was merely articulated to me in the accent of the thirties. I ask of a play, first the dramatic question, the carpenter-builders question what is its ultimate force? How can that force be released? Secondly, the human question—what is, its ultimate relevancy to the survival of the race.

Thus the Depression experience formed the basis of Miller's conception of the social drama. It forms the background in plays like ALL MY SONS, DEATH OF A SALESMAN and A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS.

Many critics have found a remarkable similarity between Henrik Ibsen and Arthur Miller. There can be no doubt that Miller found in the dramatic method of Ibsen an exact way of realising some of his concerns. It is the Ibsen of the middle period with whom Miller identifies himself; the author of THE PILLARS OF SOCIETY, A DOLL'S HOUSE, GHOSTS, AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE and THE WILD DUCK. These are Ibsen's realistic social dramas. The tragic problems of individual versus society held profound implications for Arthur Miller. Thus, in his plays, there are certain concrete and specific echos from Ibsen's theatre and thus critics hurl the term 'Ibsenesque' and have usually tended to overpress the point.

In his "Introduction" to the Collected Plays, Miller pauses to examine 'Ibsenism' as a technique and which inspired his own ideas of craftsmanship from the beginning of his career.

If his plays and his method do nothing else, they reveal the evolutionary quality of life. One is constantly aware, in watching his plays of process, change and development......What I believe to be the biggest single dramatic problem namely is how to
dramatize what has gone before......because dramatic characters and the drama itself can never hope to attain a maximum degree of consciousness unless they contain a viable unveiling of the contrast between past and present and the awareness of the process by which the present has become what it is. And I say this finally, because I take it as a truth that the end of drama is the creation of a higher consciousness". 17

The tragedy of the Depression years taught Miller that

there was a hidden or half concealed order in the universe, some vital connection existing between the private destiny of the individual and the vaster economic and social forces at work in the world outside". 18

This explains Miller's constant concern with causes, actions. Thus, we find in ALL MY SONS, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, THE CRUCIBLE and THE PRICE, characters and incidents are deeply rooted in the past; the plays cannot move forward without moving backward to dig up the roots.

There are also many critics who see a close affinity between Miller and 'Leftist' writers like Odets, Lillian Hellman, Elmer Rice etc. The theme of work alienation and its depersonalising effects on the individual runs like a dark thread through most of his plays. The notion that the human personality becomes a marketable commodity in a capitalist system and the resulting self-alienation of the individual leading to social unhappiness figures prominently in DEATH OF A SALESMAN and to some extent in MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS. The 'Depression' made Arthur Miller realise that it was not just financial stress alone that shook the foundations of American life at that time but a false ideal which the preceding era, the 'twenties' had raised to the
level of a religious creed; 'the idea of success'. The unsuccessful Man, the one who failed in business was a flawed man. Thus, the root of evil was "the false ideal, the dream of success, the hot air of the corrupted American dream". In his plays, Miller seeks the maintenance of individual dignity within the context of the family which broadens to the concept of society as a whole. Here again Miller acknowledges his debt to Ibsen -

It is obvious to begin with that Ibsen's Mission was to create not merely characters but a context in which they were formed and functioned as people. That context, heavily and often profoundly delineated was his society. His very idea of Fate, for instance, was the inevitability residing in the conflict between the life force of his characters struggling with the hypocrisies, the strangling and abortive effects of society upon them. Thus Ibsen had to draw society in his plays as a realistic force embodied in money, in social mores, in taboos and so on as well as an internal subjective force within his characters. 

Thus it is through his plays that Miller comes to make something of existence. He has said

I am not calling for more ideology...... I am simply asking for a theatre in which an adult who wants to live can find plays that will heighten his awareness of what living in our times involves. I am tired of seeing man as merely a bundle of nerves. That way lies pathology and we have pretty well arrived.

After having discussed the various influences on Arthur Miller's writings, his own critical writings, it is necessary for us to study in-depth the plays he has written. Inspite of the interpretations propounded by various critics, there is one common thread weaving through all his plays.
As Miller himself says -

That is why we must have a theatre. For above all, the theatre places man in the centre of the world. We must have a point of adventurous stillness, the quiet eye of the storm, from which to witness the age old revelation of a man challenging God in the working out of his fate. 22

Here, the emphasis is on placing 'Man' in the centre world. In all his plays, Arthur Miller deals with an individual confronted by many ordinary situations, family situations, social situations that an average reader can relate to. We are lulled into a feeling of complacency, we are invited to participate in a domestic scene where there is love between Father and son (All My Sons), between husband and wife (Death of a Salesman). But as the plays progress, they move not outward but inward, ploughing through the masks, tearing through the curtains; an inward journey reaching down to the hitherto unexplored depth of the human mind and heart, till the character is revealed to us in all his weakness, his faults. Nothing is hidden and we are confronted with the "Self", unhampered and free from all illusions imposed on it. The end of the journey is reached and the moment of truth is upon us.

Thus, in all his plays, the core of human nature, the 'Self' is revealed naked in its various manifestations. Miller in his "Introduction" to the Collected Plays says -

These plays, in one sense are one's response to what was in the air, they are one man's way of saying to his fellow men; this is what you see; what you really are, what you really know, but have not had the time, or disinterestedness or the insight or the information to understand consciously. Each of these
plays in varying degrees, was begun in the belief that it was unveiling the truth but unrecognised as such...... and in this respect at least the function of a play is to reveal him to himself so that he may touch others by virtue of the revelation of his mutuality with them. If only for this reason, I regard the theatre as a serious business, one that makes or should make man more human, which is to say less alone". 23

Thus, being a serious artist, he has shown interest in the fundamental problems of contemporary life which emerge essentially from the unchanged human nature. Miller's plays are a combination of the Psychological and Sociallogical drama. The exploration of the 'Self' in the context of certain social situations. "The true social drama", which he calls the whole drama "must recognise that man has both a subjective and an objective existence, that he belongs not only to himself and his family but to the world beyond". 24 But if the playwright is to be concerned with both the psychological man and social man, he is inevitably forced to deal with the problem of identity. In Miller's early work, each of his heroes is involved in a struggle which results from his acceptance or his rejection of an image of himself, an image that partly grows out of his own illusions and partly out of the values and prejudices of society. This study aims to analyse Miller's plays in both these aspects, a journey both inward and outward. It will study some basic questions raised in his plays - the quest for identity, how far is the individual himself responsible for his tragic existence and how far is society responsible

It will be a study of exploration and exposition; to separate illusion from reality, man from image till the very core of human nature is reached, till the self is revealed, naked and vulnerable. Thus, the study will focus on two of the most important aspects of Arthur
Miller's work - THE STUDY OF SELF and THE STUDY OF SELF AND SOCIETY. The accent of this study will focus heavily on his early plays written up to and including the revised version of A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (1957). Thus, the next three chapters will discuss in detail four of his important plays, ALL MY SONS, DEATH OF A SALESMAN, THE CRUCIBLE and A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE.

Miller's early plays form a cohesive group, although at first glance they seem very different. As Miller himself says -

Now I should like to make the bold statement that all plays we call great, let alone those we call serious are ultimately involved with some aspect of a single problem. It is this; how many a man make of the outside world a home? How and in what ways must he struggle, what must he strive to change and overcome within himself and outside himself if he is to find the safety, the surroundings of love, the ease of soul, the sense of identity". 25

The following chapters on the early plays of Miller will explore this basic problem - the crisis of identity and Miller's purpose of writing drama which is to

embrace the many sidedness of man. In a word there lies within the dramatic form the ultimate possibility of raising the truth-consciousness of mankind to a level of identity as to transform those who observe it". 26

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END NOTES


6. Ibid., P. 12.

7. Ibid., P. 13

8. Ibid., P. 3

9. Ibid., P. 3


12. Ibid., P. 36

13. Ibid., P. 36


15. Ibid., P. 4


17. Arthur Miller, "The Introduction to the Collected Plays", P. 21. All subsequent references to "Introduction" are to this edition; Arthur Miller's Collected Plays (New York Viking Press, 1957), the title of which is hereafter abbreviated as C.P. It contains the following plays - ALL MY SONS (A.M.S.), DEATH OF A SALESMAN (D.S.), THE CRUCIBLE (C.R.), A MEMORY OF TWO MONDAYS (M.T.M.), A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE (V.B.). All citations to these plays are from this edition.


26. Ibid., P. 232.

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